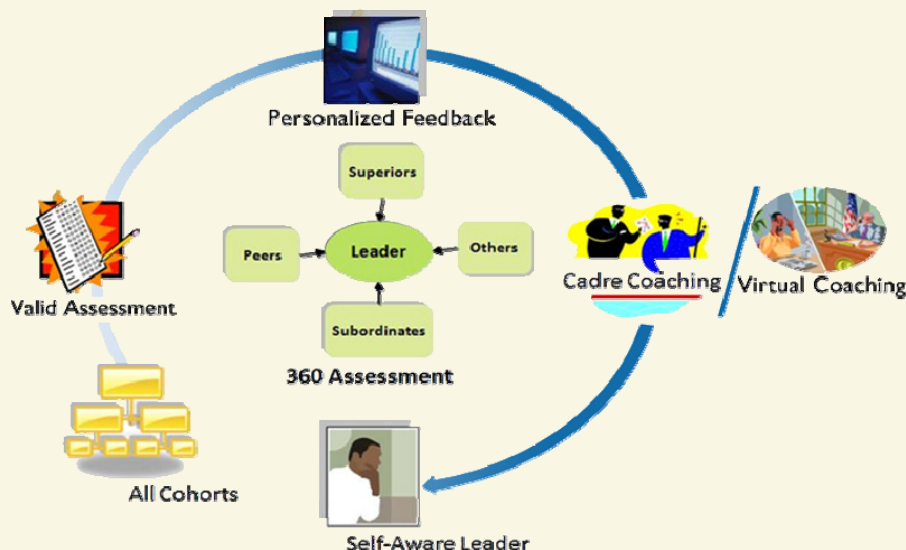




What is Army MSAF?

The Multi-Source Assessment and Feedback (MSAF) program was developed to enhance leader development for active Army and civilian leaders serving in today's complex operational environment. The MSAF program is under the organization and direction of the Center for Army Leadership (CAL), U.S. Army Combined Arms Center (CAC), which is the action agent for leader development, leadership research, leadership doctrine, and professional military education systems to sustain excellence in the Army's core competency of growing leaders.



In this Issue

What is Army MSAF?

- A detailed description of the MSAF program and its components.

What is Coaching?

- A brief description of how to provide coaching in the MSAF context.

The Many Roles of an MSAF Coach

- Sometimes MSAF coaches may need to play the role of a coach, developmental counselor, consultant, mentor, or teacher. Learn how and when to use each of these types of interventions depending on the situation.

Communication Techniques for Effective Coaching

- A bulleted list of best practices on three communication techniques for effective coaching: active listening, powerful questioning, and direct communication.

Providing a Complete Picture of Leadership

The MSAF program's main goal is to increase leader self-awareness by gathering objective feedback from multiple sources around the leader—a process known as "360-degree feedback." By collecting feedback from the leader's superiors, peers, and subordinates via an online assessment, leaders can gain valuable insight into their strengths and development needs—and ultimately become more self-aware. Self-aware leaders play to their strengths, know their weaknesses, and are less likely to set themselves up to fail than others. But greater self-awareness doesn't just benefit Army leaders, it benefits all their cohorts as well.



What is Coaching?

Coaching is not just an activity reserved for the sidelines of a football field or the locker room of a basketball game. In fact, coaching, in its most basic sense, is a one-on-one relationship in which the coach helps a leader move to a desired state of performance. While the concept of coaching may have been stigmatized in the past, coaching is neither a remedial action for poor performance nor a rigid process for improvement. Coaching is flexible guidance that focuses on a leader's strengths and opportunities to succeed.

In the MSAF context, coaching is the essential element that links feedback interpretation (from either a 360 assessment, self-reflection, or both) with developmental planning and execution. Throughout the MSAF coaching process, the leader continually communicates, elicits feedback, and self-reflects in order to improve upon or develop new behaviors. The MSAF coach remains objective, helping the leader to interpret and understand his/her feedback, identify strengths and developmental needs, provide insight or suggestions on how to build on knowledge and skills, and guide the leader through the creation and execution of an individual development plan (IDP).

With catchwords such as training, mentoring, consulting and coaching popular currently, it is easy to believe that one term is synonymous with another. Coaching, however, differs from other roles in tangible ways (see "The Many Roles of an MSAF Coach" on page 2 of this newsletter). Coaches provide leaders with both the groundwork and the opportunity to create and sustain their own development opportunities, enhance work-based relationships, build stronger skill sets, and create an improved professional life.

Ask the Expert: Have Your Questions and Challenges Responded to by A Professional

Submit your coaching question or challenge and it may be featured in our next coaching newsletter. Send an email including a brief description of the issue or challenge and the question to Heidi Keller-Glaze, Ph.D. at hkeller-glaze@icfi.com. While all questions may not be answered in the coaching newsletter, we will try to respond to as many of your pressing concerns as possible.

Learn More: The Virtual Improvement Center (VIC)

The Virtual Improvement Center (VIC) is available as a resource for leader development on the MSAF website. The VIC offers numerous developmental activities including readings, exercises, and simulations organized by the Core Leader Competencies to make it easy to search by developmental need. This is an excellent resource for leaders to develop knowledge and skills. Coaches should be familiar with the VIC in order to appropriately recommend it to leaders.



The Many Roles of an MSAF Coach

The term “coaching” is frequently used to mean anything from a senior officer working with a more junior officer, to having a buddy and calling it a coaching partnership, to seeking advice on a challenging technical concept. The MSAF coach should not only be able to identify the distinctions among the five different types of roles (coaching, developmental counseling, consulting, teaching, and mentoring), but should also be able to apply them either separately or in concert to solve a presented issue or challenge. If coaching is not the right fit, the coach should be able to identify an alternate role and quickly transition to it.

	Definition	Focus	Best to Use when the Client...
Coaching	Customized development process that uses observable data, questions, and a supportive and partnering relationship to create solutions and a path forward	Helping the leader to translate ideas and awareness onto the job, developing competencies and capacities, and balancing individual and organizational goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shows the capacity for insight Is open to new ideas and experiences Readily engages in open dialogue
Mentoring	Voluntary developmental relationship that exists between a person of greater importance and a person of lesser experience	Creating a relationship in which the mentor is invested in the progress and success of the participant and the mentee develops a career path or skill set	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wants assistance in following a particular career path Needs a combination of teaching and coaching to introduce skills
Developmental Counseling	A process used by leaders and a subordinate to review a subordinate’s demonstrated performance and potential	Driven by a specific event, to review performance or provide specific feedback which leads to establishing performance objectives and standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has a clear developmental need or situation requiring change Is exploring potential solutions
Consulting	Expertise in the form of strategies, products, tools, and ideas to resolve a specific challenge	Recommending a direction or solution to a challenge by providing expert skill and knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has a need or problem that requires specific expertise Seeks a clear direction forward
Instructing	A process in which an individual with specific content expertise educates others	Transferring knowledge from an expert to a learner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Needs to acquire specific skills, knowledge, or abilities

What are some of the situations that require coaching rather than another type of intervention?

Below are some of the common situations or scenarios you might encounter as an MSAF coach and the corresponding type of developmental intervention you should use.

	Coaching	Mentoring	Developmental Counseling	Consulting	Instructing
1. A leader scores himself much higher on his MSAF 360 assessment in communication than his superiors or peers. He does not understand why he received this rating.	✓				
2. A civilian writes in her Individual Development Plan (IDP) that she wants to be more familiar with the services her division offers.					✓
3. A leader shares with a coach that his career goal is to be promoted to general officer, but the leader isn’t sure of the path to get there.		✓			
4. A coach working with a leader on communication suggests that the leader and his team convene an AAR to discuss strengths and opportunities for improvement on a mission they just completed.	✓		✓		
5. A leader seeks advice on which team member he should choose to work with him.				✓	
6. A coach works with a leader to show her how to succeed in her new job function at HQ.		✓			
7. A first lieutenant wants to take a more multi-disciplinary approach to his work by merging three different teams on a mission to boost productivity and innovation.	✓		✓	✓	

Communication Techniques for Effective Coaching

For coaching to be effective, the leader and coach must be able to build a relationship of mutual trust and respect through open communication. As opposed to simply telling or instructing subordinates on how to best behave in a particular situation, a coach steps back, and **actively listens** to what the leader is saying with his or her words and physical reactions.

A coach will use **powerful questioning** to challenge the leader's assumptions in a non-combative way and stimulate them to think in new ways. Both listening and questioning help build **direct communication** in the coaching relationship, which means using language that is clear and direct while maintaining a nonjudgmental stance. Just as a Soldier knows when to apply certain aspects of their training, an effective coach may use each of these techniques individually and together with another for maximum positive impact.

✓ Using Active Listening to Convey Understanding

- Summarizes or mirrors back the meaning of what the leader has said to ensure mutual understanding
- Distinguishes between the leader's words, tone of voice, and nonverbal cues (see example)
- Allows the leader to vent about the situation without judgment

✓ Using Powerful Questioning to Challenge Assumptions

- Asks questions that reflect active listening and understanding of the leader's perspective
- Asks thoughtful questions that challenge the leader's assumptions without seeming to demand a justification for past actions
- Asks open-ended questions that create greater clarity or new learning
- Is clear and articulate in stating coaching objectives and providing feedback

✓ Communicating Directly for Positive Impact

- Helps leader see his or her current situation from another perspective that is meaningful
- Uses language and non-verbal behaviors that are appropriate, respectful, and sensitive to the leader (e.g., non-sexist, non-racist, and non-technical language)

Active Listening: Case Study

SFC Buchanan is meeting with a coach for the first time. The coach notices that as SFC Buchanan is interpreting his IFR, he is tapping his foot nervously. The coach also picks up an edge to the sergeant's voice, as if he is resentful or not fully accepting of the feedback. One of the ways the coach senses SFC Buchanan's resentment is that he himself feels defensive, as though (as a coach), he needs to justify his feedback and its importance.

The coach asks SFC Buchanan what has motivated him to seek coaching at this time. The sergeant responds by saying he was told by his superior to get coaching or he would not be considered for higher grade responsibilities. This awareness helps the coach to better understand the resentment as fear and concern. The coach then asks the captain what his expectations for coaching are and if he anticipates gaining anything from the coaching session. The coach listens carefully to the captain's answer without interrupting and asks questions that build on what the captain is saying.

Participation in Army MSAF is voluntary, and is available to Army officers, NCOs, warrant officers, and Army civilians across the Active, Guard, and Reserve components. Especially opportune moments for MSAF including post-deployment, before and after serving in a command position, and after a mission rehearsal exercise (MRE). With your help, we can increase Army leader self-awareness and develop better, stronger leaders.



For more information about MSAF coaching, please contact:
LTC Madeline T. Bondy
madeline-bondy@us.army.mil
madeline-bondy@conus.army.mil